

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-6

NEW YORK TIMES
1 NOVEMBER 1982

U.S. IS SAID TO PLOT AGAINST SANDINISTS

Newsweek Says Ambassador
'Oversees' Rebel Campaign
on Honduran Border

By ROBERT D. McFADDEN

The United States Ambassador to Honduras is "overseeing" a covert campaign to arm, train and direct thousands of Nicaraguan exiles in Honduras to "harass and undermine" Nicaragua's three-year-old Marxist Sandinist Government, according to an article in Newsweek magazine.

In its Nov. 8 issue, Newsweek quoted an unidentified "Washington insider" as having said that the Ambassador, John D. Negroponte, had been sent to Honduras by former Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. and Thomas O. Enders, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, as the "spearhead" of the clandestine operation.

A State Department spokesman, Anita Stockman, said yesterday that officials had not yet seen the magazine report and she declined to comment on it. She also noted that it was the department's general policy not to comment on reports involving covert intelligence.

Anti-Sandinist exile groups have been operating out of Honduras for three years, and reports of raids by right-wing exiles along the Honduras-Nicaraguan border have been circulating for at least six months.

The operation originally was authorized to restrict the flow of arms through Honduras to El Salvador, the magazine noted. But it has "escalated far beyond Washington's original intentions" with the recruitment of exiled troops of Nicaragua's former dictator, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, and now threatens to provoke war between Nicaragua and Honduras.

When asked about recruiting Nicaraguan exiles, Mr. Negroponte, according to Newsweek, said, "No comment, no comment and a big fat no comment." He also was quoted as having said, "The only Nicaraguan I know personally is the Nicaraguan ambassador in Honduras."

Shultz Reported 'Fuming'

Secretary of State George P. Shultz was characterized by another United States official, according to Newsweek, as "fuming over the mess."

Nicaraguan Government officials have charged that the United States is training and protecting the counter-revolutionaries in Honduras. And they have also warned of war with Honduras unless the attacks are halted. The Reagan Administration has denied Nicaraguan claims that it is trying to destabilize the Sandinist regime.

Newsweek said that the right-wing forces in Honduras were drawn from 2,000 Miskito Indians, 10,000 anti-Sandinists and "an assortment of former Nicaraguan national guardsmen." Operating from 10 camps, they have raided bridges, construction sites and Nicaraguan patrols, the magazine said.

The raids are "designed to harass the Sandinistas while C.I.A. operatives cast around for a moderate new Nicaraguan leadership," Newsweek said.

The magazine said there were 50 agents of the Central Intelligence Agency in Honduras, as well as "dozens of operatives, including a number of retired military and intelligence advisers," and an unspecified number of Argentine military advisers.